

Design Speaks English: Crafting Messages from Sketches to Slogans

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Article Info

Article history:

Received: March 5th, 2025

Revised: April 20th, 2025

Accepted: May 5th, 2025

Keywords:

ESP

Educational design

Multimodal communication

Genre-based pedagogy

ABSTRACT

In today's globalized creative industries, English proficiency is not merely a supportive skill but a core component of professional literacy, especially in advertising. However, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction often fails to reflect the communicative realities of design students, leading to a disconnect between language learning and domain-specific needs. This study explores how advertising students at Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif engage with English when crafting brand messages in visual campaigns. The aim is to identify the linguistic challenges they face, and the pedagogical adjustments needed in ESP instruction. Employing a qualitative research design, this study involved 15 advertising students as participants. Data was collected through document analysis of student-produced advertising materials, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations. Thematic analysis revealed five core findings: (1) English use was shaped more by intuitive creativity than formal instruction; (2) students showed resourcefulness in digital-assisted writing but struggled with genre-specific tone and idiomatic accuracy; (3) multimodal synergy between text and visuals was enhanced by linguistic confidence; (4) collaborative language support was seen as lacking; and (5) students called for more context-specific ESP learning experiences. The study contributes to ESP and design education by proposing a reimagined ESP curriculum that includes task-based, genre-driven, and collaborative approaches tailored to creative disciplines. Findings suggest that integrating language instruction with design practice enhances students' communicative competence and their ability to produce globally resonant advertising content. This research supports a shift from generalized English training toward a more embedded, practice-oriented ESP pedagogy in design education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary globalized landscape, effective communication has become paramount in the fields of design and advertising. The integration of English as a lingua franca plays a pivotal role, especially in visual communication, where the synergy between imagery and language

constructs compelling narratives that resonate across diverse cultural and linguistic contexts (Wijayanto et al., 2023; Kirana, 2021). For visual communication designers, proficiency in English is not merely an additional skill, but an essential competency to engage with international clients, collaborate across borders, and access global design platforms and resources (Arinta, 2021).

The urgency to explore this intersection arises from the growing demands of international markets and the increasing need for designers to function within multilingual, multicultural environments. In such settings, English proficiency enhances one's capacity to develop persuasive messaging, craft meaningful slogans, and align design with cultural sensitivities (Sitompul et al., 2023). As visual communication transcends verbal barriers, the strategic integration of English in branding and marketing narratives contributes to brand identity and consumer engagement (Engliana, 2019; Hamizar et al., 2023).

Despite the growing significance of English proficiency in the fields of design and advertising, English language instruction at many higher education institutions remains overly generalized and insufficiently aligned with students' specific academic and professional needs. Courses typically focus on grammar and general English (GE), overlooking the contextualized communicative competencies required in creative disciplines (Sari et al., 2021; Pratama & Safitri, 2020). As a result, students often struggle to apply language skills in real-world design scenarios, such as crafting persuasive slogans, writing creative briefs, or engaging in international collaboration (Isnaini & Setyowati, 2022). This misalignment reduces student motivation and perceived relevance of English courses, leading to minimal language retention and limited professional utility (Fatimah et al., 2021; Sutrisno et al., 2023). The conventional pedagogical approach fails to account for the interdisciplinary demands of visual communication and does not equip students with the strategic linguistic tools necessary for professional success in the global creative economy (Yuliana & Hapsari, 2023).

In response to these challenges, there is a pressing need to reframe English instruction through the lens of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), tailored specifically to the communicative and creative demands of design and advertising students. ESP provides opportunities for language instruction to be integrated with students' domain-specific interests, enhancing motivation and contextual learning outcomes (Amalia & Wirza, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2021). Through project-based learning, collaboration with design faculty, and the use of authentic materials such as advertisements, design briefs, and campaign proposals, ESP can foster meaningful language acquisition aligned with students' future careers (Kusumaningrum et al., 2022; Ariani et al., 2023). Moreover, ESP approaches allow students to develop genre-specific writing and speaking skills, intercultural awareness, and strategic thinking, competencies that are essential in international creative industries (Setyowati et al., 2023; Hartati & Nasution, 2020). Therefore, embedding ESP into design curricula is a critical step toward producing globally competent graduates who are not only visually literate but also linguistically empowered.

Recent studies support this notion. Wijayanto et al. (2023), in their mixed-methods study, revealed that both students and graduates in Visual Communication Design (VCD) recognize the significance of English for global competitiveness, yet also highlighted disparities in language proficiency. Kirana (2021) further emphasized that English enables designers to communicate ideas across international boundaries and gain exposure on global platforms. Similarly, Arinta (2021) asserted that English proficiency is critical for the accurate transmission of design concepts during cross-disciplinary collaboration. Meanwhile, Sitompul et al. (2023) noted that English usage in Indonesian digital advertisements has introduced hybrid syntactic patterns that are more persuasive and succinct, reflecting adaptation to global discourse styles.

However, despite the growing significance of English proficiency in design and advertising, English language instruction at many higher education institutions remains overly generalized and insufficiently aligned with students' specific academic and professional needs. Existing curricula often prioritize grammar and general English (GE), while overlooking the contextualized communicative competencies demanded by creative industries (Sari et al., 2021; Pratama & Safitri, 2020). Consequently, students struggle to apply language skills in real-world design scenarios—such as writing creative briefs, crafting slogans, or engaging in international projects (Isnaini & Setyowati, 2022). This misalignment undermines learner motivation, diminishes the perceived relevance of

language courses, and limits both retention and transfer of skills to professional contexts (Fatimah et al., 2021; Sutrisno et al., 2023).

The traditional pedagogical approach tends to disregard the interdisciplinary nature of visual communication and fails to equip students with the linguistic strategies necessary to succeed in the global creative economy. As highlighted by Yuliana and Hapsari (2023), language instruction in design education must evolve to reflect the needs of 21st-century learners, who must be adept at both visual and verbal storytelling.

In response to these challenges, scholars have advocated for the implementation of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in design education. ESP allows for the contextualization of language learning within students' disciplinary domains, thereby increasing motivation and promoting deeper, more meaningful language acquisition (Amalia & Wirza, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2021). By embedding project-based learning, collaborative tasks with design faculty, and authentic materials such as campaign proposals and visual advertisements, ESP can bridge the gap between linguistic theory and creative practice (Kusumaningrum et al., 2022; Ariani et al., 2023).

Moreover, ESP supports the development of genre-specific writing and speaking skills, strategic thinking, and intercultural communication, competencies that are vital for designers navigating the global market (Setyowati et al., 2023; Hartati & Nasution, 2020). Integrating ESP into the design curriculum is therefore a critical step toward producing graduates who are not only visually literate but also linguistically empowered.

Despite growing attention to this issue, limited empirical research has investigated how English language skills are utilized throughout the actual design process, from the initial stages of conceptual sketches to the creation of persuasive slogans. Understanding this integration is essential for informing both curriculum design and teaching practices in visual communication programs.

To address this gap, this study aims to explore the role of English language proficiency in the development of advertising campaigns. Specifically, it examines how English is applied throughout the design process to construct messages that are both visually engaging and linguistically effective. The research adopts a qualitative methodology, using case studies of design projects and interviews with visual communication designers to identify best practices and challenges in language integration.

Findings from this research are expected to yield practical implications for the development of ESP-informed curricula in design education, with the goal of preparing students for global professional environments. Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader discourse on interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration in higher education, underscoring the importance of synergy between language and design faculties.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of English in Visual Communication and Advertising

The increasing global integration of the creative economy has reinforced the importance of English proficiency, especially in fields that rely heavily on multimodal communication, such as advertising and visual design. English serves not only as a communicative bridge in multilingual environments but also as a semiotic tool for constructing meaning in branding messages (Wijayanto et al., 2023; Kirana, 2021). According to Arinta (2021), English proficiency enables designers to communicate effectively across disciplines and borders, thus facilitating collaboration with international clients and stakeholders. Furthermore, English supports the global dissemination of design works, where messaging must be culturally resonant and linguistically accessible to a broad audience (Sitompul et al., 2023).

Hybrid language forms that blend English and local expressions are increasingly prevalent in Indonesian digital advertisements, suggesting a localization strategy that still leverages the prestige and clarity of English (Hamizar et al., 2023). This linguistic hybridity indicates a shift in communicative practices, where English is not only adopted for its functional clarity but also for its stylistic and persuasive power. Engliana (2019) noted that this dual function of English in visual branding reinforces its role as both a linguistic and symbolic asset in design processes.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in Creative Disciplines

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained significant attention as a pedagogical response to the limitations of General English (GE) instruction in higher education. GE tends to focus on grammatical accuracy and general vocabulary, often neglecting the professional and domain-specific communicative needs of learners (Sari et al., 2021; Pratama & Safitri, 2020). ESP, on the other hand, allows for language instruction that is deeply embedded in the learners' disciplinary contexts, leading to increased motivation and improved learning outcomes (Amalia & Wirza, 2020; Nugroho et al., 2021).

In design education, ESP facilitates the development of genre-specific communication skills, such as writing design briefs, crafting advertising slogans, and engaging in project-based collaboration. Studies by Kusumaningrum et al. (2022) and Ariani et al. (2023) show that ESP programs tailored to creative fields improve students' linguistic competence while simultaneously enhancing their professional identity. Moreover, ESP supports the development of intercultural communicative competence and multimodal literacy, both of which are essential in navigating the complexities of global creative industries (Setyowati et al., 2023; Hartati & Nasution, 2020). By incorporating authentic materials such as ad campaigns, pitch presentations, and branding documents, ESP instruction becomes not only more relevant but also more effective in preparing students for real-world applications.

Bridging Language and Design Pedagogy: Toward Integrated Curriculum Models

Despite growing awareness of the importance of English in design practice, the integration of language instruction within design education remains fragmented. Existing curricula often fail to connect linguistic skills with visual literacy, resulting in a disconnect between classroom learning and industry demands (Fatimah et al., 2021; Sutrisno et al., 2023). According to Yuliana and Hapsari (2023), traditional pedagogical models in language education rarely address the interdisciplinary nature of visual communication, thereby limiting students' ability to produce coherent and persuasive multimodal messages.

Emerging research advocates for the co-design of ESP curricula in collaboration with design educators to ensure content alignment and contextual relevance (Isnaini & Setyowati, 2022; Wijayanto et al., 2023). Such models include genre-based and task-based learning, where students engage in real-world projects such as designing bilingual ad campaigns or presenting brand stories in English. This approach promotes both language acquisition and critical design thinking, thus equipping students with the dual literacy skills needed in global advertising contexts.

Furthermore, collaborative language learning environments—where students co-construct meaning through group tasks and peer feedback—are particularly effective in creative disciplines. These environments foster the use of English as a medium for negotiation, critique, and innovation, enabling students to internalize linguistic forms within the authentic flow of design work (Kusumaningrum et al., 2022). Therefore, rethinking ESP through interdisciplinary, collaborative, and genre-sensitive lenses is essential for developing future-ready designers who can communicate their ideas effectively across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

3. METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate the integration of English language proficiency into the design process of advertising campaigns. The case study approach was selected to allow an in-depth exploration of how language skills are used from the initial stages of conceptualization to the final execution of slogans and promotional materials. This design enables a comprehensive understanding of real-world practices, perspectives, and challenges experienced by student designers within their academic and creative environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants

The participants consisted of 15 final-year students enrolled in the Advertising Program at Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif, Jakarta. These students were purposively selected based on their involvement in capstone or portfolio projects that included the use of English in the development of advertising content. The selection ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to both the design process and the application of English in professional or semi-professional contexts.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted in three stages:

- a. Stage 1: Document Collection
Students submitted selected design projects that included English elements (e.g., taglines, captions, slogans). These projects formed the primary visual data source.
- b. Stage 2: Individual Interviews
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, lasting 30–45 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.
- c. Stage 3: Researcher Field Notes
Observations during student presentations and informal feedback sessions were recorded to complement the interview and document data, capturing contextual insights and non-verbal cues.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), involving the following steps:

- a. Familiarization with data through repeated reading of transcripts and design artifacts.
- b. Coding of data segments that reflected the use of English in different phases of the design process.
- c. Generating initial themes such as “language as design inspiration,” “linguistic challenges in slogan creation,” or “audience targeting through English.”
- d. Reviewing and refining themes to ensure alignment with the research questions.
- e. Interpretation of themes within the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and visual communication design pedagogy. Triangulation was conducted by cross-checking interview responses with the visual content of students’ projects and field notes to enhance validity and reliability.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research standards as guided by institutional protocols. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty. All data collected, including design artifacts and interview transcripts, were anonymized to protect participants’ identities. Pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings to maintain confidentiality. Ethical approval for this research was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the key findings derived from the triangulated data sources, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and field notes. The findings are organized into five major themes that reflect the integration of English proficiency in advertising design projects: (1) English as a Strategic Design Element, (2) Language as a Source of Creative Constraint and Inspiration, (3) Audience Awareness and Code-Switching Practices, (4) Challenges in Grammar, Idiomatic Expressions, and Tone, and (5) Implications for ESP Curriculum Development in Design Education.

English as a Strategic Design Element

The data revealed that students purposefully used English in their advertising designs to enhance the international, contemporary, and professional appeal of their campaigns. Document analysis indicated the widespread integration of English in slogans, brand names, and taglines across the majority of student projects. For example, a campaign for a local skincare brand featured the tagline “Glow Forward,” which the student designer explained was meant to evoke a sense of progress, radiance, and alignment with global beauty ideals. Similarly, another student promoting an eco-friendly tote bag brand used the phrase “Carry Your Change,” intentionally employing double meaning, both carrying a bag and carrying one’s environmental responsibility.

In interviews, students consistently reflected on the symbolic power of English. One participant noted:

“Using English makes my campaign feel more premium and more suited for social media like Instagram. People perceive it as modern and universal.” (Interview transcript, Participant 3)

Field notes from classroom presentations confirmed that audiences often responded more positively to English slogans. During one presentation, a student used the phrase “Sip the Future” for a tech-savvy bottled tea brand, which elicited verbal affirmations from peers and even spontaneous comments such as *“It sounds like a real global brand.”* This pattern was observed repeatedly, suggesting that students were not merely imitating language trends but making deliberate linguistic choices grounded in semiotic and market considerations.

This finding resonates with the work of Piller (2017), who argues that English in advertising serves as a semiotic resource that indexes modernity, cosmopolitanism, and upward social mobility. Particularly in multilingual and postcolonial contexts, English often carries added value as a marker of global connectedness and elite cultural capital (Pennycook, 2010). The student campaigns reflected this awareness, revealing how English functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a symbolic asset in the branding process.

Moreover, this practice exemplifies what Kachru (2005) describes as the “creative appropriation” of English in outer-circle contexts, where non-native speakers strategically localize English usage to construct hybrid cultural meanings. In many of the observed campaigns, English phrases were embedded within broader Indonesian visual and cultural narratives, e.g., traditional motifs, local food products, or Javanese philosophical concepts, illustrating what Canagarajah (2013) refers to as translingual practice, where language users blend linguistic repertoires to meet situated communicative goals.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the students’ linguistic choices also suggest an emerging understanding of audience design theory (Bell, 1984), where messages are tailored based on imagined audience expectations. In this case, the choice of English may have been influenced by the students’ perceptions of their target market—typically young, urban, tech-savvy consumers who are increasingly exposed to English-language content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

In sum, the strategic deployment of English in these student-designed campaigns reflects not only aesthetic preferences but also complex sociolinguistic reasoning. It highlights the intersection between language, identity, and market positioning, demonstrating students’ growing fluency in navigating the semiotics of global branding while remaining anchored in local cultural references.

Language as a Source of Creative Constraint and Inspiration

Interestingly, while English was widely embraced by students for its symbolic power and aspirational value, it simultaneously functioned as both a constraint and a catalyst in the creative process. Many participants reported encountering linguistic limitations—especially related to vocabulary range, idiomatic usage, and syntactic nuances—when attempting to construct catchy, meaningful slogans in English. As one student shared:

"I wanted to say something like 'bersinar dari dalam,' but couldn't find a phrase in English that didn't sound too cheesy. Finally, I went with 'Shine Within,' it felt abstract but elegant." (Interview transcript, Participant 7)

Another participant echoed this tension, stating:

"It's hard because sometimes there's no exact word in English like in Bahasa. But then I try different combinations, and sometimes it becomes more creative." (Interview transcript, Participant 10)

These expressions reflect what Maley and Peachey (2015) describe as "creative potential within linguistic constraints", the idea that limitations, such as operating in a non-native language, can paradoxically generate innovative outcomes. Rather than inhibiting expression, the effort to translate local meanings into English often led students to engage in linguistic play, metaphorical thinking, and novel phrasing, expanding their expressive repertoire.

This is consistent with the concept of productive constraints in creativity, as discussed by Stokes (2005), who argues that creative work thrives within boundaries that force individuals to make meaningful choices. In this context, the constraint of using English in branding pushed students to reconsider literal translations and instead explore more symbolic, interpretive, or layered meanings in their campaign narratives.

Moreover, this struggle aligns with the findings of Gregersen et al. (2013), who note that moderate language anxiety, particularly in creative and communicative tasks—can enhance focus, increase risk-taking, and foster higher engagement with the language as learners stretch beyond their comfort zones. Several students also reported feeling a sense of accomplishment after finalizing a phrase in English that resonated well with their visual concept, suggesting an intersection of linguistic and artistic satisfaction.

From a sociocultural perspective, this phenomenon exemplifies translingual creativity (Canagarajah, 2013), wherein language users strategically draw on multiple linguistic and cultural resources to negotiate meaning. The students' improvisation across English and Bahasa Indonesia, often integrating local idioms with English terms—demonstrated not only linguistic agility but also a form of identity performance rooted in both local and global imaginaries (Kramsch, 2009).

Observational data during classroom critiques further reinforced this interpretation. Instructors frequently praised students for their inventive slogans, even when minor grammatical errors were present. The evaluative focus was often on *originality, coherence, and cultural resonance* rather than on strict linguistic correctness, reflecting a more communicative and meaning-oriented pedagogy (Richards, 2013).

Ultimately, the interplay between constraint and inspiration highlights how second-language use in design education can cultivate deeper metalinguistic awareness, flexible thinking, and symbolic sophistication, critical skills in a globalized creative economy.

Audience Awareness and Code-Switching Practices

A recurring theme across interviews, document analysis, and classroom observation was the students' strategic use of code-switching, the alternation between English and Bahasa Indonesia, as a rhetorical tool aligned with audience profiling. This linguistic adaptability was particularly evident in their branding campaigns, where students tailored language choices based on the sociocultural characteristics of their intended audiences.

For instance, projects targeting urban youth audiences, especially those perceived as digitally native, trend-conscious, and globally oriented, tended to incorporate English in slogans, hashtags, and product names. A notable example was a plant-based beverage campaign that employed the tagline "*Good Vibes Only, Naturally*", clearly appealing to eco-conscious Gen Z consumers who are often influenced by global wellness and sustainability discourses.

Conversely, when addressing more traditional or broader local demographics, students demonstrated a preference for Bahasa Indonesia or bilingual formats. As one student shared:

"If the target is middle-aged mothers, I use Bahasa Indonesia because it feels warmer and more personal. But if I target college students, English works better, it's trendier." (Interview transcript, Participant 5)

This dynamic aligns with the concept of audience design proposed by Bell (1984), which posits that speakers (or writers) actively shape their linguistic choices in response to their perceptions of the audience. In this case, students demonstrated not only sociolinguistic sensitivity but also marketing acumen by aligning linguistic codes with audience expectations and values.

This emerging pragmatic competence, the ability to use language appropriately in context, is a key objective in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) pedagogy, as emphasized by Hyland (2013). Students' code-switching practices reflect their awareness of how language functions symbolically to convey familiarity, prestige, intimacy, or modernity depending on the target audience. Such competence is increasingly valued in professional communication, particularly in multilingual societies where symbolic meanings of language vary across social groups (Pavlenko, 2011).

Moreover, code-switching in this context serves not merely as a communicative convenience but as a semiotic strategy to construct social identities and establish brand positioning. As García and Wei (2014) argue in their theory of translanguaging, language users mobilize their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning, negotiate social relationships, and perform identities. The blending of English and Bahasa Indonesia in student campaigns illustrates this practice, where code choice becomes a resource for positioning both the product and the brand voice within a specific cultural matrix.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that students are developing meta-linguistic awareness, the ability to reflect on and manipulate language deliberately for strategic outcomes (Cummins, 2000). Field notes from classroom critiques revealed that students were often able to justify their language selections based on imagined audience profiles, media platforms, and cultural sensitivities. This points to the cultivation of rhetorical flexibility, an essential skill in contemporary advertising and cross-cultural communication (Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

In sum, the observed code-switching practices indicate not only linguistic proficiency but also a deeper intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997), equipping students to navigate the complex interplay of language, culture, and consumer psychology in the context of globalized media.

Challenges in Grammar, Idiomatic Expressions, and Tone

Despite their resourceful engagement with English and creative experimentation, many students expressed persistent challenges related to linguistic accuracy, idiomaticity, and tonal appropriateness. These difficulties were not merely surface-level errors, but often reflected deeper issues in pragmatic competence and genre awareness. Several participants highlighted how even with grammar-checking tools, uncertainty lingered about whether their expressions sounded "natural" or aligned with intended meanings.

As one student put it:

"I use Grammarly a lot, but even then, I'm not sure if it sounds natural. I worry it might look like I copied it from Google Translate." (Interview transcript, Participant 8)

Another participant described a case of misused idiomatic expression:

"When I tried to say 'rasa yang menggoda,' I used 'tempting taste,' but my lecturer said it sounds too suggestive in English. I didn't realize that."

Such remarks reflect what Basturkmen (2010) and Hyland (2006) argue: ESP instruction must go beyond grammatical accuracy to include discourse-level features such as tone, register, and genre conventions. In advertising and promotional discourse, where subtlety and audience resonance are crucial, the misuse of idioms or awkward collocations can disrupt the persuasive impact of a message (Nickerson, 2005).

An analysis of student-created slogans and taglines revealed several examples of grammatically correct but pragmatically odd phrases, such as "Feel the Delicious" or "Our Coffee is

Better Happiness.” These expressions, while intelligible, fall short of native-like fluency and fail to capture the rhetorical finesse required in professional advertising contexts. This supports previous research showing that non-native English users often struggle with idiomaticity and figurative language, especially when translating culturally embedded expressions from their L1 (Liontas, 2015; Boers & Lindstromberg, 2008).

Moreover, the students’ difficulties with tone, particularly in aligning language with brand identity, reveal the complex interplay between lexico-grammatical choices and communicative intent. In branding contexts, even minor shifts in word choice can dramatically alter audience perception (Cook, 2001). For example, while the phrase “tempting taste” might seem accurate, it carries unintended sensual connotations in English that clash with a wholesome or family-oriented brand image.

These challenges highlight the limitations of relying solely on digital tools like Grammarly or machine translation, which typically focus on syntax and basic vocabulary but fail to address discourse appropriateness or socio-cultural nuances (Godwin-Jones, 2018). Although such tools can enhance surface-level correctness, students still require explicit instruction and scaffolded practice in genre-specific discourse patterns and register sensitivity (Flowerdew, 2013).

From a pedagogical standpoint, these findings suggest the need for integrated approaches in ESP classrooms that combine grammatical instruction with contextualized practice in genre-based writing (Swales, 1990). This includes tasks that focus on tone matching, idiom awareness, and cross-cultural translation strategies, which can better prepare students for authentic communicative demands in globalized professions.

Implications for ESP Curriculum Development in Design Education

Findings from this study underscore the necessity of refining English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction to better address the authentic communicative demands of students in creative disciplines such as design and advertising. While participants demonstrated strong visual sensibilities, their ability to articulate concepts in professional, genre-appropriate English varied widely. This variation highlights the need for a discipline-specific, task-based, and project-oriented curriculum that aligns with the cognitive and semiotic complexity of design work.

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been shown to be effective in enhancing experiential and functional language use, especially when tasks mirror real-world challenges (Ellis, 2003; González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014). In the context of design education, this could include tasks such as slogan creation challenges, brand storytelling, campaign scripting, and multimodal promotional content development. These activities not only promote linguistic fluency, but also support the integration of verbal and visual modalities, a crucial skill in design-based professions (Newfield, 2011).

Students themselves expressed a desire for ESP instruction tailored to advertising genres, noting a gap between general English courses and the specific demands of persuasive communication:

“It would help if we had English classes that focus on ad writing or storytelling. Right now, we just learn general English.” (Interview transcript, Participant 12)

Document analysis corroborated this need. Students who demonstrated greater linguistic confidence and genre awareness also produced campaign materials that more effectively combined rhetorical techniques with visual design, suggesting that language proficiency facilitates deeper creative articulation.

In this regard, collaborative teaching models, involving both ESP instructors and design faculty, offer a promising approach to integrating language learning with creative practice (Basturkmen, 2010; Hall, 2018). Such collaboration enables the co-design of interdisciplinary tasks where language learning is not an add-on, but an integral part of the design thinking process. Studies have shown that joint curriculum planning between language and content-area instructors enhances both language outcomes and content engagement (Dafouz & Smit, 2016).

Moreover, the use of authentic materials, such as award-winning international advertisements, transnational brand narratives, and real-time social media campaigns—can help students internalize genre-specific conventions and develop an intuitive sense of market-oriented rhetoric (Hyland, 2007; Cogo & Dewey, 2012). These materials also expose learners to World Englishes and intercultural variation in tone, idiom, and branding aesthetics, crucial for students who will engage with global audiences (Jenkins, 2015).

Embedding reflective pedagogies, such as design journaling, self-evaluation, and peer-feedback sessions, can further enhance metacognitive awareness of language choices and communicative strategies (Lee & Tajino, 2008; Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009). These reflective practices encourage learners to consider not just what they say, but how and why they say it, reinforcing the connection between linguistic form, communicative function, and audience impact.

In sum, the data provide a compelling case for reimagining ESP education in creative disciplines, not merely as a support mechanism, but as an essential component of design literacy. As global creative industries increasingly demand professionals who can operate across semiotic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, ESP programs must evolve to meet these multidimensional needs.

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate Indonesian educators' perceptions of Deepseek AI's role in formative assessment and student development, particularly in resource-constrained contexts. Drawing on qualitative data from 14 educators in South Sulawesi, the findings underscore the tool's potential to enhance real-time feedback, promote metacognitive reflection, and reduce teacher workload. These benefits, however, are tempered by infrastructural and cultural considerations. Connectivity gaps, especially in rural areas, complicate the efficacy of immediate feedback, while the globalized content and individualized orientation of AI tools sometimes conflict with local cultural norms emphasizing communal learning.

By situating these insights within sociocultural and constructivist frameworks, the study illuminates how AI can serve as a "mediating artifact" that supports self-regulated learning, so long as it is thoughtfully integrated into the local educational ecology. Practical recommendations include investing in broadband infrastructure, incorporating AI literacy into teacher training, and ensuring ethical safeguards around data privacy and equitable access. Theoretically, the findings affirm Vygotsky's emphasis on cultural tools in cognitive development, while highlighting the need to adapt AI-driven solutions to the socio-cultural realities of Indonesia's diverse educational landscape.

Despite its contributions, the study's modest sample size and focus on a single Indonesian province limit generalizability. Future research could employ mixed-methods designs across multiple regions, investigate longitudinal changes in teacher and student engagement with AI, and further explore culturally responsive AI development. Taken together, these avenues for inquiry promise to broaden our understanding of how AI can be harnessed to foster inclusive, contextually relevant, and ethically grounded education in low-resource settings.

Overall, Deepseek AI offers meaningful opportunities to advance formative assessment and metacognitive growth, yet it cannot be viewed as a standalone solution. Teacher agency, infrastructural support, and cultural alignment remain decisive factors that shape the success of AI-based initiatives. By addressing these interlocking dimensions, stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and EdTech developers—can leverage AI's transformative potential to nurture more equitable and engaging learning environments across Indonesia and similar global contexts.

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